

Germans could come in sufficient numbers to the succour of their routed allies. It is fair to point out here that Pétain, Franchet d'Esperey and Micheler suggested a combined offensive in Italy on these lines in March, as an alternative to the attack on the Chemin des Dames. Had this advice been pressed to the point of acceptance and action, Caporetto might have been anticipated and reversed. The Italians had a definite numerical superiority over the Austrians. Had they been equipped with a corresponding superiority in heavy guns and ammunition, the Austrians might have been overwhelmed. They certainly would have been taken completely by surprise. Their soldiers had no experience on any front of that kind of bombardment and it would have completely unnerved them for some time. It would have taken weeks to steady and *My reasons* ran them. If the Italian advance, *the plan*⁹ measured by kilometres, had been comparable to that of the Austrians in their unexpected attack in May, 1916, or to the German break-through at Amiens in March, 1918, or in June, 1918, at Chateau Thierry, the Istrian Peninsula would have been captured and Pola with its trouble-some submarine base would have been cut off. Had it been as great a success as Caporetto was for the Central Powers, the Italians would have reached Laibach and penetrated beyond to the coal basin of Carniola. Why could it not have

been done?
The Austrians were not better men than
the British
who fought in front of Amiens, or the
French who
were driven back to the Marne in 1918.
These were the considerations that led
me, on
becoming Prime Minister, to make a
fresh effort
to dissuade the French Government
from the